The term FEMINISM is an ideology which denotes female. Feminism is the liberation in all its approaches as a woman who recognizes herself and is recognized by others as feminist. The feminist consciousness is the consciousness of victimization. As a philosophy of life, its oppose women’s subordination to men in the family and society, along with men’s claims to define what is the best for women. Feminism is defined as a mode of existence in which the woman is free of the dependence syndrome whether it is the husband or the father or the community or religious and ethnic group. Even today an average woman feels uncertain about his identity as a social being. So feminism is committed to the struggle for equality for women right historically and politically. It emphasizes Feminism the value of women as they are.

The present paper attempts to probe Desai’s expression of her pre-occupation with the modern idea of building the society free from male domination. An attempt has been made to show how Desai represents the theme of uniqueness of sensibility of women as compared with male counterparts and how they suffer on account of emotional as well as physical repression and become the victim of male dominated social and cultural order.

Anita Desai is one of the most eminent and distinguished Indian English writers writing today. Her dual heritage, both racial and cultural has been a strong impact on her life and had also influenced her writing at the thematic as well as stylistic level. She was born of a Bengal father and a German mother in Missouri, India, on 24th June 1937. She was educated at Queen Mary’s Higher Secondary school, and then at Miranda House, Delhi University, she took her bachelor’s degree in English literature in 1957. Born and brought up in India, she was definitely influenced by her mother’s foreign cultural also. At the age of seven, she began to write prose, mainly fiction and published some small pieces in children’s magazines. Anita Desai is a recipient of many awards in India and abroad. She held many prestigious posts in India and other countries of world. Her novel Fire on the Mountain for which she won the Royal Society of the literature’s Wini Fred Holt by Memorial Prize and the Sahitya Academic Award for English for the year 1978. Her Clear Light of Day was short listed for the 1980 booker prize. Her In Custody was also listed for Booker Prizes. Published in 1963, Cry the Peacock is the one of the most poetic and evocative Indian novel in English. It brings out the unique sensibility of a sensitive woman in sharp contrast to the ditched and practical attitude of an insensitive husband. The novel can also be seen as spectrum of presentation of
the ways of dealing with the binary as object. It is seen to be difficult for a woman to reconcile with
the reality of life, bend down as she is down as she is weighed by the traditional Hindu values.
Cry the Peacock is the story of highly emotional, sensitive and imaginative woman Maya. Maya is
shown to be fast disintegrating under the pressure of marital discord. Married to an unresponsive and
insensitive husband Gautama, she is driven from emotional instability in the beginning to madness,
Insanity and murder towards the end. Her only sin is that she is sensitive, imaginative, passionate and
sensuous and thus represents the disturbed psyche of modern Indian woman. She tries to strike balance
between institution needs and intellectual aspirations and is deeply bewildered when the existence
absurd of life is brought before her. When she experiences loneliness and lack of communication, she
feels herself in mental crisis. She is seen to share a very affectionate marriage. Her problem up
bringing caused before her mother’s death makes her detached from the world outside. The
expectations she had at marriage of her husband, who is much older than her are not fulfilled. As a
result, she becomes stultifying. She finds her husband Gautama, as a man in whom understanding was
scant, love was merged. But as one reads through the novel, one finds that her husband love and
cherished her, but does not take her seriously and that too because she is a woman. He identifies her
with “MAYA” which repulses her and to which she objects. As time passes, she becomes more and
more restless, starts brooding over the feeling of emptiness in her heart. It is clear from the following
statement regarding the marriage:
………..It was broken repeatedly, and repeatedly the pieces were picked up and
Put together again. As of sacred iron with which out of the prettiest superstition, we
could not bear to par………..(40)
The cold and unresponsive attitude of husband becomes further clear as he asks Maya to go to sleep
“while he worked at papers”. Maya is a victim of emotional as well as physical depression.
…………he did not give another thought to me either soft willing body or the lonely
waiting mind that waited near the bed………..(9)
Maya and Gautama are poles apart. There is a lack of communication between the two. This is clear
from the attitude of her husband towards her after the death of Toto. He fails to realize her” misery
“and does not know how to “comfort “her. Insensitivity of the husband becomes clear from the
following:
………..he knew nothing that concerned me. Giving me an opal ring to wear on finger, he
did not notice the translucent skin beneath. The blue flashing veins that ran under and
out of the bridged of gold and jolted me ……..(9)
Maya’s attitude to nature and physical world also shows her obsessive love of life. She gives highly
sensuous account of the world of nature of flower and fruits, forms and colors. She has the deep
sensitivity, quite deeply inclined by the sights and sounds, forms and colors of the natural world. She
is infuriated when she finds that her husband fails to notice the dust storm. Gautama for her is
representative of male centered materialistic civilization and culture. The act of murder is revolt
against callous materialistic social order. Maya believes that she is not fit to live in this world based on
male centered wisdom, reason and order. She wants to be free from the chains of slavery based on
customs and established norms of the society.
………..all order is gone out of my life. All formality, there is no plan, no
peace nothing to keep me with the pattern of familiar, everything living
and doing……….(195)
There is other trait of Maya’s character which transcends the idea of feminism. She is in search of new vista for a woman’s a space in which she is at par with man. The dance of the peacock’s who destroy each other in spite of being madly in love. Maya thinks of her married life with Gautama as a deadly struggle in which one is distressed to kill the other. Rebuffed by her husband, Maya is torn between her love of life and her fear of death. She says:

God; now I am caught in the net of the inescapable, where lay the possibility of mercy, of release. This net is no hallucination, no am I gone insane? Father!

Husband, who is my savior? I am in need of one. I am dying and I am in love with living, I am in love and I am dying, god let me sleep, forget me, But no

I’ll never sleep again. There is no rest any more only death and waiting”.

The gloomy state of affairs is unacceptable to Maya. Hence she eases her tension psychologically by thinking how peacock stamps its and strikes its break against rock, and how it seizes the snakes to breaks its body to relieve its own pain of past and present dilemmas.. This affects her consciousness badly and she craves for an urgent outlet of her emotions. Thus under the spell of delusion, she kills Gautama and commits suicide. Her unconscious desire to kill her husband is a revenge reaction arising out of her own basic frustrations- unhappy married life, unfulfilled longings and a reaction against her husband’s cold unresponsiveness. Through this murder and suicide, she experiences fulfillment and is relieved from the anxiety of past and present dilemmas.

Women in Desai, tent to make constant comparisons between their father’s houses. In their search of fulfillment, women continue to rely on the house. When it becomes clear to that the house cannot fill their emotional spiritual vacuum, they choose to withdrawal becomes a symptom of Maya. To study the predicament of Maya, it is important to see her life as structured between her father’s house and her husband’s both locations act as a reflection of her attractive figure-nurtured by the values of her class, she also becomes a threat to that very system.

CONCLUSION

The novelist has thus highlighted the female predicament in various aspects. She excels, particularly in elaborating the miserable position of highly sensitive and emotional women tortured by negligence and loneliness. Through Maya’s character, Anita Desai upholds a new vista of feminism writing.

REFERENCES

1. Desai Anita, Cry, the Peacock, New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann, 1981.